A SHORT

DISCOURSE

(After *SERMON*)

Recommending the

Service and Prayers

OF THE

CHURCH;

Delivered in a

Meeting-House in *Edinburgh*,

September 28th, 1712.

By William Smart, *Minister of the Gospel.*

Published at the earnest Desire of the Hearers.

JEREM. vi. 16. *Ask for the old Paths, where the good Way is, and walk therein.*

ROM. xv. 6. *With one Mind, and with one Mouth, praise God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

1. COR. i. 10. *I beseech you, Brethren, by the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak one thing.*

1. COR. vi. 20. *Glorify God in your Body, and in your Spirit, which are Gods.*

EDINBURGH,
Printed by JAMES WATSON, M. DCC. XII.

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A Short Diſcourſe, (after Sermon) recommending the Service *and* Prayers *of the Church.*

THAT None may think his Liberty leſſened, or diminiſhed, by being bound to obſerve the SERVICE and PRAYERS of the Church, we would conſider, That Prayer is either *Publick* or *Private*. *Private* Prayer is that, whereby we expreſs our particular Deſires, on our ſeveral Occaſions, to God every Day, according to our particular Exigencies: And for theſe we are left to our own Liberty and free Choice, as to the Circumſtances of Time and Place, and Manner of Performance, as our Occaſions require. *Publick* Prayer is of more general Concern, and has not been received by All, with that Reverence and Regard that it ought.

THEREFORE I think it proper and neceſſary to diſcourſe a little of That, upon this Occaſion. And, 1. *Of Set Forms of Prayer in general.* And then, 2. *Of the Service and Prayers of the Church in particular*; to obviate ſome of the little frivolous Scruples, that ſome may have concerning them, which are induſtriouſly ſuggeſted by thoſe who are Enemies to all Set Forms of Divine Worſhip.

I. AND, *Firſt*, for *Set Forms of Prayer in general.* No Man being openly ſo impious and wicked, as plainly and directly to condemn Publick Prayers; it has been the grand Stratagem and Policy of Satan (knowing that hereby his Kingdom is moſt ſhaken) to traduce the Form and Manner of them. And hence, I fear, has proceeded that Conceit which abounds in our Time among us, That to ſerve God with any Set Form of Prayer, is ſuperſtitious and unlawful. But the

Novelty of this Conceit, is enough to shew the Emptiness and Vanity of it, it being contrary to the Judgment of approved Councils, learned Fathers, and the continual Practice of the Church; as is clear from *Tertullian*, *Origen*, *Basil*, *Ambrose*, and the rest of the Holy Fathers, whose clear and evident Testimonies to this Purpose (to be short) I pass over, it being out of doubt, to any that are in the least acquainted with their Writings. *Constantine* the Great, prescribed a Set Form of Prayer to his Soldiers, set down by *Eusebius* in his 4th Book. Yea, *Calvin* himself (the first Author of our Ecclesiastical Presbyterian Parity, whose Testimony in other Things our Presbyterian Brethren use to prefer to the Testimony of all the Fathers of the Church) in his 83d Epistle to the Protector of *England*, says plainly and expresly, *That he doth greatly allow of a Set Form of Ecclesiastical Prayers, which all Ministers should be bound to observe.*

But the Scripture it self is clear enough in this Point: For *Numb.* 6. 23. God Himself did frame to His Priests, the very Words wherewith they were to bless His People, *On this Ways, saith the Lord, shall ye bless the Children of* Israel, *saying unto them* (can any thing be more plain?) *The Lord bless thee and keep thee, the Lord make His Face to shine upon thee, and grant thee His Peace.* Here is a set Form of Prayer. And surely, if it were superstitious, or unlawful, to resume Prayers, and to use them again as Prayers, then *Moses* can never be sufficiently excused for giving so great Occasion of Scandal unto the World, in leaving so dangerous a Precedent for the casting of Prayers into certain Poetical Moulds, and for framing Set Forms of Prayers, which might be repeated often, although they never had the Occasion, which first brought them forth; as his Song for that admirable Victory over *Pharaoh*, which at first was written in Metre.

Yea, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself (as it were on purpose to prevent this Fancy of Extemporary Prayers) has left us one of His own framing, *Matth. 6. 9. Pray ye therefore after this Manner*: And *Luke* 11. 2. *When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in Heaven*, &c. Surely of all other Prayers, this must needs be the Best and most Excellent: For altho' Men should speak with the Tongues of Angels; yet Words more pleasing and acceptable unto God, than these which the Son of God Himself hath composed, are not possible for Man to frame; God here-

in propoſing unto us the moſt abſolute Perfection that can be in Men's Deſires, and the higheſt Mark whereat they are able to aim.

But Men's Curioſity herein, has brought to their Minds an Evaſion, whereby they fancy themſelves ſecure enough; that Chriſt here only propoſes unto us a Patern of Prayer, not binding us to uſe the Words themſelves. We grant, indeed, that this Prayer ſerves as a Pattern, whereby to frame all other Prayers, with Sufficiency and and without Superfluity of Words; but it is alſo given us, that it might remain as a Part of the Church's Liturgy: And therefore in all Ages wherever the Chriſtian Religion was received, this Prayer was always uſed as a Part of the Church's Service. Hence it is, that our Saviour ſo expreſly ſays, not only *Pray ye after this Manner*, in S. *Matthew*; but alſo, *When ye pray, ſay, Our Father which art in Heaven*, &c. in S. *Luke*. If this Prayer were only given us as a Pattern, we might pray according to this Pattern, and yet not ſay, *Our Father which art in Heaven*, &c. So then for us to think, that Chriſt here did only ſet us a bare Example how to deviſe and contrive Prayers of our own, and not binding us to uſe the Words themſelves, is, no Doubt, an Error; which will appear further on this Conſideration. Shall we think, that the Diſciples of *John* the *Baptiſt*, who had been all their Days in the Boſom of God's Church from the Time of their Infancy until the Time that they came to the School of *John* the *Baptiſt*: Shall we think, I ſay, that they were ſo brutiſh and ſtupid, as to be ignorant how to call upon the Name of God? No ſurely, but of their Maſter they had received a Form of Prayer among themſelves, which they alone did uſe, and no others; whereby they were diſtinguiſhed from all others. The Diſciples of Chriſt taking Notice of this, they requeſt, that as *John* had taught his Diſciples, ſo He would teach them to pray. Chriſt ſatisfieth their Deſire, and anſwers their Requeſt, *Pray ye after this Manner*, ſaith he in S. *Matthew*; and, *When ye pray, ſay, Our Father which art in Heaven*, &c. in S. *Luke*.

The chief Argument of our Presbyterian Brethren againſt this, and all other Set Forms of Prayer, is this, That our Spirits are ſtinted and ſtraitned, when they are fettered with Words appointed. I anſwer, That the Freedom of the Spirit in Prayer ſtands not in the Multitude of Words, or Variety of Expreſſions: It lies not in that Liberty that is in the Will to follow the Fancy, in ſuch and ſuch Words, Sen-

tences.

tences, Phrases and Expressions, as it at that Instant shall suggest and represent to the Mind. This is not the Liberty of the Spirit in Prayer, but the Liberty of the Fancy of him that prayeth. Yea, for the Spirit to be bound in these to follow the Fancy whither it pleaseth, is rather a Bondage than Freedom and Liberty. But the Liberty of the Spirit in Prayer stands rather in the Intenseness of the Zeal, wherewith our Prayers are uttered before God, in that Fervency of Spirit wherein the Apostle tells us, the Nature and Manner of our serving God a-right doth consist. The Spirit of Prayer is not a Heat of Passion and Prejudice, but the earnest and ardent Desire of the Soul, *fervent in Spirit serving the Lord*, saith the Apostle. And besides, if this Argument say any thing against Set Forms of Prayers, it says as much against all Conceived and Extemporary Prayers. Are not all Prayers Set Forms to him that heareth? If the Spirit of him that heareth, be larger than his that speaketh, he is no less stinted and restrained than with any Set Form. Again, this Argument militates as much against the singing of Psalms, in which there are many Set Forms of Prayers. When we sing these Psalms, do we not pray by Set Forms; and consequently our Spirits must be no less stinted and restrained, than when we make use of these Set Forms of Prayers, which are appointed by the Church? Nay, our Presbyterian Brethren themselves, use the same Form of *Blessing*; and consequently their Spirits must be no less stinted than others in their Set Forms, though herein they be contrary to themselves, they seeming rather to allow of a Set Form of *Cursing* than of *Blessing*: For it is observed of some, that when they come to that Part of their Prayers, wherein they are concerned to pray for their Enemies, that they ordinarily turn that into a perfect Plat-form of Curses and Execrations against those whom they count their Enemies.

II. But now to come more closely to our Purpose, *The Service and Prayers of the Church. My Brethren*, it has been the constant universal Practice of the whole Christian Church from the Apostles Days to ours, to have their Liturgies and Set Forms of Prayer. And though all Churches have not had the *same* Form; yet there has been scarce any Church but have used some Form or other. And whatever Difference may be among these Forms, in some little Modes and Circumstances; yet in all Orthodox and Reformed Churches, they all agree in the general

neral Rule of Faith and Worſhip; and, ſome Way or other, in their ſeveral Circumſtances tend to Edification and Decency. And therefore, for any Man to ſay, that it is not lawful to uſe a Set Form in the Publick Worſhip of God, is to contradict the general Senſe of the whole Catholick Church, and to think himſelf wiſer than all the Chriſtians that ever were before him.

NAY, even our Presbyterian Brethren, who are not aſhamed to own themſelves ſtated Enemies to all Set Forms of Publick Worſhip, find that they cannot be without Them. Nature it ſelf teaches, that Publick Actions cannot be performed with Order and Decency, unleſs the Manner and Circumſtances of them be determined and regulated. As we ſee, all civil Courts have their publick Orders and Forms; and ſo in the Worſhip of God, in all Nations and Ages, there have always been Publick and Set Forms appointed for the due and decent Performance of it. And therefore Mr. *John Knox*, one of the firſt, together with the other Reformers, did not only agree to the ſetting up of *Imparity* in the Church, but to the eſtabliſhing a *Liturgy* and *Set Forms of Prayer*, for the publick Worſhip, which continued long in this Kingdom until a Set of Presbyterians, not thinking *Knox*'s Liturgy ſufficiently reformed, (though authorized by their own Aſſembly) ſet up in it's Place *A Directory for publick Worſhip*, compiled in the late rebellious Times by the Aſſembly at *Weſtminſter*, and authorized by the General Aſſembly of the Kirk of *Scotland*; and which is now the preſent Preſbyterian Book of *Common-Prayer*. And as they laid aſide their former Book of Common-Prayer, *Knox*'s Liturgy; ſo they may lay this aſide when they pleaſe too, ſince they do not obſerve it: For it recommends the *Lord's Prayer* expreſly, not only as a Pattern of Prayer, but as a comprehenſive Prayer it ſelf, which they recommend to be uſed in the Prayers of the Church.

AND truly, *My Brethren*, all the Reformed Churches in the Chriſtian World, have their Liturgies and Set Forms of Prayer in the Publick Worſhip of God. And the *Scots* and *Engliſh* Books of Common Prayer are more Full, Perfect and Complete, than any in the World; the chief and principal Parts of them (taken from the ancient Liturgies of the Primitive Church, laying aſide the later Corruptions of the *Romiſh* Church) have been in conſtant Uſe in the Church of Chriſt for above 1200 Years, and were never ſcrupled by any, 'till our late Times of

Trouble

Trouble and Confusion here in *Britain*, when all Government, Order and Unity, were utterly overturned.

And can we think now, that any will have the least Scruple or Objection against this Book? Certainly there would be none, were there not a Generation of Men among us, who love to live in *Egypt*, and to feed on Garlick, rather than in *Canaan*, to be nourished with Milk and Honey. These Men are Active, Diligent and Industrious in fomenting Jealousies among People, in raising groundless Apprehensions and Fears, in injecting Doubts, Scruples and Objections, against all Order and Government in Church and State, and against that Decency that is in the Prayers and Set Forms of the Church: And the Minds of Men are jumbled and confounded with a great many little frivolous Things of no weight or moment. I shall touch some few of these Things which are scrupled and objected among us.

1. First then, some are displeased *that we make use of the* English *Liturgy and not of our own, seeing we have one of our own, and which some Divines of the Church of* England *prefer to their own.* But our own Book of Common Prayer is almost out of Print, at least we have not a sufficient Number of them, as (by the pious and generous Disposition of good Christians in *England*) we are supplied with *English* Books at this Time. And there is no material Difference between the *Scotish* and *English* Books of Common Prayer; they differ as little as the *Scotish* and *English* Tongues, and are upon the Matter one and the same: So that this Objection serves for nothing.

And now, *My Brethren*, this Book certainly contains the best *External* Form of Divine Worship in the World: And upon that Account, certainly it is the most excellent Book that ever was in the World, next unto the Bible. Nay, you find all the most material Parts of the Bible here, with admirable Prayers and Devotions, short and plain, fitted and suited to the Publick Worship of God, according to the best Patterns of Christ and His Apostles, and the Primitive Fathers. And shall we then prefer the pitiful Effusions and Productions of our own Brains to the constant Devotions of the Christian Church? Shall we think, that the Holy Spirit of God will direct and assist those Prayers that are dictated by every Man's private Spirit, rather than those that are dictated by the publick Spirit of the Church? Can we hope that God will hear our Prayers, and grant our Requests, sooner when we put them

them up to Him in our own Words, than in the Words of His own Son? No surely, in Reason it can never be expected.

2. But what is it then, that displeases Men at this Book? One would think, that the very Name of a Book of Common Prayer should invite all Christians to it, and not fright them from it, before they read it, or know what is in it. Many call this Book, *Popery*, who know as little of It, or Popery either, as of the Man in the Moon (who think Antichrist to be a Beast with Horns) but know the one or the other, or not know them, this they know, *That it is Popery, it is Superstition, it is Idolatry, it is Blasphemy.* Why? *It is black Popery.* Surely, *My Brethren*, this is the height of Impudence: It cannot be Ignorance; it can be nothing but wilful Malice and Prejudice. Pray you, *My Brethren*, read this Book all over, and see if there be any thing of Popery in It: Read It all over, and see if there be any thing in It for *Transubstantiation*, or *Purgatory*: Read It all over, and among all the Prayers that are in It, see if there be any *Prayer for the Dead*, any *worshipping of Images*, any *praying to Saints and Angels.* Were not some of the reverend Compilers of this Book (as *Cranmer, Ridley*, &c.) burn'd at the Stake for Hereticks by the Papists? Why then are we so unjust and injurious as to call It Popery? Are we not ashamed in this Matter to make our selves Liars, and Slanderers, and Calumniators? Is this, I pray you, Christian like? When Men call this Book *Popery*, they only shame and affront themselves, by affirming that which all the World knows to be false.

3. But, in the next Place, *Why*, say they, *are we so forward and zealous for this Service now, when we made no Steps towards it all the Reign of K.* Charles *the II, when we had learned, and pious, and good Bishops, who yet never offered to set up this Service?* This is a mighty Objection in some Men's account, and very frequent in their Mouths, and they triumph greatly in it. But I answer, It is very true, we had then very pious and good Bishops; yet some that make that Objection now, call'd these good Bishops then by no other Title than *The Limbs of Antichrist*, and were ready to join with the worst Parts of Popery to be rid of them. It is well known how intimate and familiar the chief Presbyterian Ministers of this Kingdom were with a certain great Person, in the Reign of K. *James* the VII. And if there be any Truth in that which has been so universally reported of them, and that by Persons of entire Credit, *viz.* That they offered to him (on Condition of laying aside the *Episcopal*, and establishing their *Presbyterian* Government) to give some Allowance to

the *Popish Mass*. I say, if this be as true as it has been generally asserted; Is it not a plain Conjunction of *Popery* and *Presbytery*, in Opposition to a Reformed *Episcopacy*? Even as, not long after, they were in some Measure reconciled to the Pope himself, when he was in Confederacy on their Side against *France*; and that in Spite of their own Doctrine of no Confederacy with Papists and Idolaters, which they have observed as they do their other Doctrines, Compacts, Covenants, and Oaths. And thus we see that Popery and Presbytery, when they get a fair Opportunity, can join Hand in Hand together, like *Gog* and *Magog*, against the holy City.

But to answer more directly to the Objection. Such was the rooted and inveterate Prejudice that the Generality of Men were under in the Reign of King *Charles* the II. having but newly come out of a violent and unnatural Rebellion both against Church and State, that it was utterly impracticable, if not altogether impossible, to set up the Service of the Churh in *Scotland*, till Time (through the Grace of God) had a little abated the Prejudices that were upon the Minds of Men against It. An Attempt of this Kind could have had no other Effect in this Kingdom, in the Reign of King *Charles* the II. than it had here in the High Church of *Edinburgh* in the Time of King *Charles* the I. when the Reverend Persons who made the Attempt, could scarce escape with their Lives. All that our good Bishops could do at that Time, they did. I hope that none will think, that any of our good Bishops had ever any Scruple to join with the Service and Worship of that Church, from which they themselves received their Orders and Consecration. Let none reflect upon them now, when they are dead; they did all that could be done. The reading of the Holy Scriptures, the Belief, and the Lord's Prayer, and Ten Commands, and the Doxology; the Use of these were got preserved (with more Difficulty then, than the whole Form can be set up now) in most Part of the Churches of this Kingdom. And this we had Reason to bless God for at that Time. And these are the most material Things in the Service of the Church. And although some have told us, *That they know no Difference between a Fanatical Meeting-House and a Fanatical Kirk* (making all our former Episcopal Churches, as well as our present Episcopal Meeting-Houses (where the Service is not) to be nothing but Fanatical Kirks both in Doctrine and Worship.) Yet these make a far greater material Difference (though the Difference be less in the *External* Form) between an Episcopal Meeting

ng-House and a Fanatical Kirk, than between an Episcopal Meeting-House with the Matter, and an Episcopal Meeting-House both with the Matter and Form of the Service of the Church. For these, upon the Matter and in Effect, are the same: So that whoever scrupled not to join with us before in the One, can have no Scruple now to join with us in the Other; seeing they are upon the Matter and in effect the same, and differ only in the *External* Form: And the *Intire* Form of the Church, is undoubtedly the best in the World.

But now when it pleases God, of His Goodness, to remove, in a great Part, the Prejudices that were upon the Minds of Men, to enlighten their Minds by Degrees, and to turn their Hearts and Inclinations to the Intire Service and Prayers of the Church, both as to Matter and Form; great Reason have we to bless God for it, and to apply our selves to the Service of God, and to join our Hearts and Voices with the whole Church of Christ. Let us not then scruple to join with these Forms and Prayers, which, for the most Part, have been in constant Use in the Church of Christ, from the very Beginning of Christianity.

4. But is there any Ground, any Cause to scruple these Forms? Some are displeas'd *that the People have their Turns, their Responses and Answers with the Minister*: That, they think, *Superstitious like*. But strange! Why superstitious? That People should join their Hearts and Voices with the Minister in putting up their Prayers and Supplications into God? Is there any Thing of Superstition here, unless we count all Prayers, and all Divine Worship to be Superstition? Whether is it more decent, That the People should join their Hearts and Voices with the Minister; or, That they should sit altogether unconcern'd, when the Minister is praying, either sleeping perhaps, or sitting with their Arms a-cross, and staring the Minister in the Face, as if they were concern'd only as idle Spectators, to observe how the Minister acts his Part? Surely, for any to speak in favours of such a lazy, prophane and irreligious Custom, Gesture and Behaviour, in our most solemn, publick and immediate Addresses to the Throne of Grace, is the grossest Stupidity that can be imagined.

5. But *Why*, say they, *so many short Pieces, and Cuttings, and Shreddings of Prayers in this Service?* Why, but that People's Thoughts may not weary, sleep or wander, but be roused up to give their Answer, to bear their Part, and to join with the Minister. And the shorter these Prayers are, they are the liker the Patterns of Prayers

which

which Christ and his Apostles, and the Saints and Servants of God has given us in the holy Scriptures.

6. BUT *Why*, say they, *do all the People mutter over the same Words together in such a confused Manner, and with such an uncertain Sound?* But do not we the same when we sing Psalms? And may we not all together *say* the same Words, as well as all together *sing* the same Words? Why are we so inconsistent with our selves, as to scruple that, which we our selves do every Day without Scruple?

7. BUT *Why*, say they, (this once more and at this Time I shall trouble you no further) *so often repeating the same Thing over and over again?* I answer, That every Repetition of the same Words, is not a vain Repetition, but expresses most naturally the ardent and earnest Desires of the Soul, and impresses them more deeply upon our Minds and Spirits, that if one Expression fall short and be defective, another may supply and enforce it. Was there any vain Repetition in our Saviour's Prayer, *Matth.* 26. 44. When he went away again, *and prayed the Third Time saying the same Words?* One of our Presbyterian Brethren, not long ago, most prophanely compares these Words in the Service of the Church, *Lord have Mercy upon us, Christ have Mercy upon us, Lord have Mercy upon us*: I say, most prophanely he compares these Words to that Prayer of the Idolaters to their *Baal*, 1 *King.* 18. 26. O Baal *hear us*, O Baal *hear us*. Tho' certainly if Baal were the true God, that would be a good Prayer. And does not *Elijah* pray over again the same Words in the same Manner to the true God, Verse 37. *Hear me, O Lord, hear me*, says he. And is not that a good Prayer for all Christians, *O Lord hear us, O Lord hear us*, albeit we repeat not these Words from Morning till Noon, as these Idolaters did. But certainly, *My Brethren*, these Words, in the Service of the Church, do serve most naturally to excite, to raise, and to express the most sincere and earnest Desire of the Soul. Suppose a whole Congregation of Christians were in a Ship, and that Ship were dashing upon a Rock, and they were all just ready to sink and perish, would they not all cry out (as not having Time to think of another Petition) *Lord have Mercy upon us, Christ have Mercy upon us, Lord have Mercy upon us?* And would these be idle and vain Repetitions? Would not these Prayers be serious and sincere? Alas, *My Brethren*, is not this our Case? Are we not all just ready to drop into Death and Destruction? It is the Lord's Mercy alone, if we live one Moment longer. Is it not then very natural, and very necessary for us, with the greatest Sincerity and Devotion, to lift up our Hearts and our Affections, our Hands and our Eyes to Heaven, and with one Voice to say with the Church in her Service, *Lord have Mercy upon us, Christ have Mercy upon us, Lord have Mercy upon us?* These are not idle and vain Repetitions, but express the earnest Desire of the Soul. But I hope there is none that belongs to this Congregation that has any Scruple to join with the Prayers of the Church.

Consider what I have said, and the Lord give you Understanding in all Things.

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